

Jaguar Conservation Team (JAGCT) Summary Notes
Animas High School, New Mexico
July 31, 2003

Introduction

Bill Van Pelt, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. All in attendance introduced themselves and the organizations they represented.

A. Opening comments and ground rules

Ground rules were the same as previous meetings. Participants were asked to raise their hand to ask a question or state an opinion. Only one person was allowed to speak and side conversations were kept to a minimum. This allowed each person to be heard and kept the meeting moving through the agenda. Participants in the Jaguar Working Group (JAGWG) (i.e. everyone present at JAGCT meetings) may comment and are encouraged to do so on any issue being discussed at the JAGCT meeting. Participants were asked to turn cellular telephones and beepers off or set on vibrate.

B. Agenda Review/Additional Discussion Points

The order of the agenda was changed per request, and item D3, Habitat identification was moved to the end of section D after number six. A special presentation regarding land acquisition for jaguars in Mexico, updates from two researchers, and the outreach summary were added to the agenda after the education report (D4).

C. Discussion of summary notes from the January 2003 JAGCT meeting

The January 2003 minutes were never sent out, so they will be attached to this summary.

The action items from the January 2003 meeting were reviewed and none were unresolved.

D. Task Reports:

1. Update on AZ-NM sightings – Tim Snow and Terry Enk

Arizona – Three reports were received since the last meeting. All three reports involved large black cats. No field investigations were conducted as follow-ups to the reports because the time elapsed was too great. All reports were Class II sightings and no Class I sightings were reported.

New Mexico – One report of a sighting in December 2002 or January 2003 came in from a fire crew member. The individual is out of the state, so a follow up interview has not been conducted.

The Center for Biological Diversity referenced a historic account of a black jaguar in southern New Mexico. The reference was regarding the lack of evidence for black jaguars occurring in Arizona/New Mexico or northern states of Chihuahua or Sonora, Mexico.

2. Kill Verification Activities (Section 5.H.2.) – Jack Childs

No depredation by jaguars on livestock has been reported.

Twelve cameras have not captured a picture of neotropical cats since December 2001. However, many other species are being captured on film, and as a result, we are learning a great deal about them. The cameras have shown no apparent fluctuation in black bear or mountain lion populations during the drought. A paper will be submitted on the Mexican brown-nosed possum from data collected during the camera study.

The permit for camera trapping has been renewed for three more years. Approximately 2,300 pictures have been captured in 3 ½ years.

3. Education (Section 6.B.) – Sue Krentz and Karen Schedler

Sue Krentz presented an education program on land use to an Honors Senior English class at Douglas High School starting in February. She presented issues on jaguars, conservation easements, and other land use subjects to the students. They were given contacts to network with using their computers, and the students were allowed to choose whom to contact. This included Bill McDonald from the MBG and ranchers in Mexico.

Sue also presented an education program to 29 teachers attending the Ag Summer Institute. This five day training session allowed teachers to receive hands on experience by taking them to ranches, farms, and the Maricopa Research Station.

Karen Schedler announced that the final version for the Jaguars study guide was completed. They made some editorial changes from comments that they received. She stressed that “final” did not mean it would never change. As new information becomes available, the content will be revised. During the Felines Natural History workshop, held in conjunction with the annual track count at Ft. Huachuca, 25 educators (formal and informal) were trained in using the guide with students. These educators will be tracked closely over the next year to determine what works and what adaptations can/should be made to the guide. There are 100 English copies, and there will be 100 Spanish copies. The guide will not just be given to any teacher (formal or informal) who asks for it. They must attend a workshop to learn how to use the materials, and to ensure that the materials are going to those who will definitely use it in their curriculum. The Spanish translation has been finished, but has not been printed yet.

A Memorandum of Understanding between Arizona Game and Fish Department and IMADES as well as Pro Natura will facilitate the ability to conduct workshops in Mexico and to disseminate information to teachers in Mexico.

Plaques were presented to Sue Krentz and Karen Husted (not in attendance) to thank them for their dedication and hard work on the education subcommittee.

Jack Childs' book "Tracking the Felids of the Borderlands" is being translated into Spanish.

4. Special Presentation – Oscar Moctezuma, Naturalia

Oscar Moctezuma with the nonprofit organization, Naturalia, spoke about his purchase of a 10,000 acre ranch in Mexico. Naturalia is committed to conserving diversity especially when it concerns endangered species. The organization's new project is the "Preserving Mexico Campaign" in which money raised will be used to purchase and protect priority areas. The organization raised money to purchase this ranch by selling silver coins with endangered species printed on them. Naturalia received a donation for each coin sold, and was able to buy the ranch to protect jaguars and other endangered species in the area. This is the first reserve in Mexico specifically purchased to protect jaguars.

Sue Krentz wanted to make sure that the education team gets Naturalia's magazine and reports or maps that the organization publishes.

5. Research Updates – Carlos Lopez Gonzales and Raul Valdez

Carlos Lopez Gonzales has been studying jaguars on the above-mentioned ranch for four years. He has a few mountain lions collared, and in March 2003 captured his first jaguar on the ranch. The jaguar was a lactating female, and has been staying in the same relative area for a while, so he believes that she is raising kittens.

Carlos is also working with ranchers in the area to get feedback regarding other benefits the ranch can provide. One example is hunting opportunities for outfitters.

Carlos suggested that he and Raul Valdez should join their projects together to develop a huge success story for jaguar conservation.

Raul Valdez's work involves the human dimensions aspect, and he is working with the first landowner conservation group in Mexico. Raul and the landowners are developing a plan for sustainable use of natural resources on approximately 74,000 acres. Though the landowners lose 10-20 heads of livestock per year by jaguar depredation, they are still participating in the group and have decided that they will no longer kill jaguars.

The landowners have also removed most of the cattle from this area, and will remove the rest in October. They have realized they could benefit from the land through other means, such as guided hunts, and will pursue that instead of ranching.

Kill verification: one young jaguar and six adult mountain lions were killed in this area, and one 3-year old female jaguar was killed just northeast of this area.

Bill Van Pelt said the Trilateral committee recognizes the need for increased information exchange between the United States and Mexico, and people are working on developing a proposal to address this.

6. Outreach Summary – Scotty Johnson

The public meetings have gone very well. The basic format is that Jack Childs speaks at the meetings, and then different stakeholders have a panel discussion. This enabled the public to become more educated on jaguar issues in a positive atmosphere.

7. Legal Protection (Section 7.A. and B.) – Terry Enk

Nothing new to report.

8. Website update – Bill Van Pelt

The jaguar website is up and running. The jaguar habitat report is on the website and the jaguar bibliography will be soon.

Accessing the website: www.azgfd.com/wildlife_conservation/jaguar_management.html

9. Habitat identification – Bill Van Pelt

AGFD finalized the report, *Characterizing and Mapping Potential Jaguar Habitat in Arizona*, and it is available on the web.

New Mexico Game and Fish finalized their habitat report and brought 40 copies to distribute. Please e-mail Chuck Hayes if you did not receive one. Connectivity was not directly addressed in the report; it only identified habitat areas. GIS was used to identify jaguar habitat.

Critical Habitat/Lawsuit – The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) said they filed the lawsuit to seek a recovery plan because conservation actions can be identified with a plan. They also wanted to change the not prudent finding.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) stands behind the not prudent decision of not designating critical habitat for jaguars. Shooting was the biggest threat to jaguars, so

critical habitat designation would increase the threat. USFWS said that the JAGCT has huge momentum, especially with Mexico being the key to jaguar conservation. USFWS stands behind the JAGCT completely. They said that completing a recovery plan is at their discretion, and they did not believe a recovery plan would help the species much. The JAGCT exists, so a recovery plan is not needed; an ocelot recovery team is the Service's priority.

USFWS representatives were asked to define the following terms. The terms and definitions they provided were:

not prudent finding: critical habitat designation is not prudent when 1) the species is threatened by taking or other human activity, and identification of critical habitat can be expected to increase the degree of such threat to the species, or 2) such designation of critical habitat would not be beneficial to the species, or 3) both 1 and 2 apply.

critical habitat: area essential for the survival and recovery of a species

CBD believes that the JAGCT falls short of recovery and a recovery plan is needed. CBD asked if everyone in attendance supports conservation, then why is everyone opposed to critical habitat.

Defenders of Wildlife (DOW) explained that more federal money does not need to be spent to develop a recovery plan. The money is there and it just is not being used.

DOW said that the last day to designate critical habitat was July 21, 2003 and a lawsuit could not have been filed after that date.

Several private landowners expressed feelings of betrayal and thought that there would be more restriction imposed on them if the lawsuit was successful. DOW responded by saying that they understand that landowners are afraid, but they should not feel that way because the lawsuit is seeking to get rid of the not prudent decision; the lawsuit was not asking for critical habitat designation. It was then pointed out that in the first paragraph of the lawsuit, it said the plaintiffs were seeking critical habitat designation.

Sue Krentz said that conflict was apparent, and the education team was not involved, but should be. She also said that jaguars could cross "the fence" anywhere, because the fence does not exist – it is falling apart.

Jack Childs said that the JAGCT had no indication when the lawsuit was going to happen, but this open discussion should have occurred prior to the lawsuit. He felt the JAGCT has been minimized.

Warner Glenn said the lawsuit has made every landowner along the border afraid. He reminded everyone who brought them the first jaguar photos. He claimed that the lawsuit could reduce the flow of information, and ultimately hurt jaguar conservation.

Kelly Glenn-Kimbrow explained that there is a different mindset, or attitude, now. The fact that Warner came forward indicates changing times.

CBD thanked Warner for coming forward. CBD continued to explain that recovery plans and critical habitat designations have never restricted hunting, only federally permitted projects.

DOW understood that conservation team members felt betrayed, but said they all were still part of a team and that DOW was trying to improve the conservation effort. DOW explained that the border patrol was the most important threat to jaguar conservation, and yet they were not part of the JAGCT.

Ben Brown said that most of the border is federal land and with Memorandums of Understandings and high-level coordination, environmental issues are being addressed, not ignored. He said that DOW and CBD do not attend any of those meetings regarding the border.

USFWS explained that it would be several months before the suit gets into the courts.

Bill Van Pelt said the purpose of the conservation team is to focus jaguar conservation, and that it was a voluntary assignment. He said the team needs to move forward, past betrayal and distrust to further the conservation of jaguars. The team needs to work through this and work harder at working together.

E. Other Business

1. Conservation Agreement

The Jaguar Conservation Agreement needs to be updated based on new information since 1997. The revisions will go through the same process as before (e.g., public meetings). Although there is no timeline yet for revising the agreement, it is a priority of AGFD.

2. Southwestern Carnivore Conference

The Southwestern Carnivore Conference will be held in Brownsville, Texas from November 18-19, 2003. Information about the conference will be posted on the jaguar website.

F. Close Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

The next JAGCT meeting will be held on January 23, 2004 at 9:00 in Douglas, Arizona at the Cochise County Courthouse.